

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 STATE 197208
ORIGIN NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 H-01 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 SS-15
NSCE-00 SP-02 DODE-00 PM-05 SAA-01 IO-13 PA-01
/059 R

DRAFTED BY:NEA/ARN:CMONROE
APPROVED BY NEA:MDRAPER
-----109195 050303Z /66

P 041907Z AUG 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 197208

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAID, SY, US

SUBJECT: HOUSE ACTION TO DROP SYRIAN SSA PROGRAM

1. NEA DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY DRAPER MET WITH SYRIAN
CHARGE ABOUCHAER ON AUGUST 3 TO DISCUSS THE IMPLICATION
OF AUGUST 2 HOUSE VOTE TO DROP THE SYRIAN SSA PROGRAM.
DRAPER, TAKING LINE OUTLINED STATE 195966 , SAID THERE
WAS CONCERN OVER SYRIA'S POSITION TOWARD THE SADAT
INITIATIVE, STRONG PROPOSITION 13-STYLE PRESSURES TO MAKE
CUTS IN SPENDING WHEREVER POSSIBLE, AND ALARM OVER
SYRIAN BOMBARDMENTS IN BEIRUT. THESE THREE FACTORS--
THE SHELLING, THE SYRIAN POSITION TOWARDS THE SADAT
INITIATIVE, AND THE MOOD FOR CUTS--CREATED AN ENVIRONMENT
IN WHICH THE SYRIAN PROGRAM HAD BEEN PLACED IN JEOPARDY.
HE STRESSED HIS HOPE THAT SYRIA WOULD RECOGNIZE THAT THIS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 STATE 197208

VOTE DID NOT REFLECT THE ADMINISTRATION'S POSITION HE
ASKED CHARGE TO EXPLAIN REALITIES OF WASHINGTON SITUATION
TO DAMASCUS, AND INDEPENDENT ROLE OF CONGRESS. U.S.-SYRIA
RELATIONS WERE IMPORTANT AND HIGHLY VALUED BY THE
ADMINISTRATION.

2. DRAPER STRESSED THAT THE HOUSE VOTE WAS NOT THE END OF THE PROCESS. THE SENATE HAD ALREADY AUTHORIZED THE FULL SYRIAN PROGRAM, THOUGH THE VOTE ON APPROPRIATION WAS YET TO COME. THE ADMINISTRATION WILL MAKE A MAJOR EFFORT TO ACHIEVE A PROGRAM. WE ARE ACCUSTOMED TO SUCH BATTLES WITH CONGRESS.

3. DRAPER COMMENTED ON HIS DISCUSSIONS ON THE HILL THAT MORNING, NOTING THAT ONE CONGRESSMAN HAD STATED THAT THE VOTE ON THE SYRIAN PROGRAM WAS A VOTE FOR PARTITION IN LEBANON. DRAPER MENTIONED OUR CONCERN THAT THE MILITANT HOTHEADS IN BEIRUT WILL BE ELATED AND RESUME CHALLENGES ON SYRIANS. THIS WAS DANGEROUS; AND SAID SYRIA SHOULD BE CAUTIOUS.

4. DRAPER REITERATED THE ADMINISTRATION'S VIEW THAT THE SYRIANS HAD PLAYED A CONSTRUCTIVE IF OFTEN THANKLESS AND DIFFICULT ROLE IN LEBANON. AT SAME TIME, IN RESPONSE TO THE ACKNOWLEDGED PROVOCATIONS AND CASUALTIES, SYRIAN TROOPS HAD GONE TOO FAR IN HEAVY SHELLING. WE DID NOT HAVE ANY BRIEF FOR THE HOTHEADS AMONG THE MARONITE MILITIAMEN, AND HAD DONE OUR BEST TO URGE RESTRAINT UPON THEM, DIRECTLY AND THROUGH OTHER PARTIES.

5. ABBUCHAER BROKE IN TO COMMENT THAT HE HAD SPENT THE ENTIRE DAY ON THE HILL AUGUST 2, UNTIL HE HAD COME TO
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 STATE 197208

SEELYE'S SWEARING IN. HE HAD BEEN CERTAIN THAT EITHER THE DERWINSKI OR BINGHAM BILLS WOULD PASS. THAT NIGHT, HE HAD BRIEFED HIS GOVERNMENT ON WHAT THE PASSAGE OF THE DERWINSKI AMENDMENT WOULD MEAN AND (WE SUSPECT ALL TOO BRIEFLY) ON THE EFFORTS OF THE ADMINISTRATION TO BLOCK IT. ABOUCHAER SAID THAT THERE WAS STRONG COOPERATION BETWEEN THE LEBANESE LOBBY AND THE ISRAELI LOBBY. WHETHER IN LEBANON OR HERE, THIS COOPERATION SHOULD BE STOPPED. ABOUCHAER SAID THAT IT WAS HARMFUL TO THE PEACE EFFORT AND TO THE UNITY OF LEBANON. REGARDING THE LOSS OF THE U.S. ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, THE LOSS WILL NOT BE GREAT IN MONEY TERMS. THE PROGRAM IS IMPORTANT SYMBOLICALLY, HE AGREED, BUT, MOST IMPORTANT, THE VOTE HAD GENERATED A GREAT DEAL OF BAD PUBLICITY FOR SYRIA. THIS WOULD BE DEEPLY RESENTED.

6. ABOUCHAER STATED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT UNDERSTAND THE DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN THE ADMINISTRATION AND CONGRESS. THE VOTE WILL BE INTERPRETED AS A NEGATIVE SIGNAL. IN HIS REPORT TO HIS GOVERNMENT YESTERDAY, HE HAD MENTIONED THE SHELLING AND THE SYRIAN POSITION ON THE SADAT INITIATIVE, THOUGH HE DID NOT MENTION THE MOOD FOR CUTS AS A FACTOR.

7. ABOUCHAER THEN POINTED OUT THAT SYRIA WAS IN LEBANON AS PART OF THE ARAB PEACE-KEEPING FORCE, TO HELP THE

LEBANESE GOVERNMENT SETTLE ITS PROBLEMS AND TO ESTABLISH PEACE IN THE COUNTRY. SYRIA BELIEVES THAT THE USG HAS ENCOURAGED AND SUPPORTED THE SYRIAN ROLE AND AT THE SAME TIME SOUGHT NOT TO ENCOURAGE "THE OTHER SIDE" OR TO PRESSURE THE ISRAELIS TO ENCOURAGE THEM. MEETING WITH "THESE PEOPLE" (MEANING THE AMERICAN LEBANESE LEAGUE) IS ENCOURAGEMENT, HE SAID, AS IS GIVING THEM AID. DRAPER RESPONDED THAT WE HAD NOT GIVEN THEM ANY AID BUT THAT, IN THIS COUNTRY, EVERY CITIZEN HAS A RIGHT TO TALK TO THE GOVERNMENT AND WE HAD MET WITH A.L.L. REPRESENTATIVES. CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 STATE 197208

8. DRAPER ASKED ABOUCHAER TO RELAY TO HIS GOVERNMENT THE ADMINISTRATION'S APPRECIATION FOR HELPING THE LEBANESE ARMY UNIT MOVE INTO SOUTHERN LEBANON. WE KNOW THEY ARE STOPPED AT KAWKABA, HE SAID, BUT WE ARE MAKING EVERY EFFORT TO GET THEM THROUGH. ABOUCHAER ASKED WHAT WE HAD DONE ABOUT THE ALLEGATIONS THAT THE SYRIANS WENT SOUTH UNDER A LEBANESE CLOAK. DRAPER REPLIED THAT WE KNEW THAT WAS NOT TRUE AND WE HAD TOLD THE ISREALIS THAT. ASKED ABOUT THE ISRAELI RESPONSE TO THAT STATEMENT, DRAPER REPLIED THAT THE ISRAELIS WERE STILL SUSPICIOUS. THEY FELT THAT THESE TROOPS HAD BEEN SUBORNED BY THE SYRIAN ARMY DURING THE CIVIL CONFLICT, AND REMAINED SYRIAN TOOLS. THE U.S., DRAPER SAID, HAD ASSURED ISRAEL THAT THEY HAD BEEN REINTEGRATED INTO THE LEBANESE ARMY UNDER THE CONTROL OF GEN. KHOURY'S OWN BROTHER. ABOUCHAER ARGUED THAT THE ISRAELIS DO NOT WANT ANY LEBANESE ARMY IN THE SOUTH, EVEN IF IT WERE 100 PERCENT MARONITE. THEY WANT ONLY THE ISRAELI-TRAINED MILITIAS. THE LEBANESE TROOPS ARE THE LEGITIMATE ARMY OF THE SOVEREIGN LEBANESE GOVERNMENT AND THEY SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO ENTER SOUTHERN LEBANON. THE U.S., HE SAID, SHOULD BE PUSHING HARDER FOR ISRAELI COMPLIANCE WITH RESOLUTION 425, AND SHOULD APPLY SANCTIONS.

9. ABOUCHAER MENTIONED THAT A U.S. PROPOSAL FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF SYRIAN TOPPOS FROM CHRISTIAN SECTIONS OF BEIRUT WAS ALSO IN THE PRESS TODAY AND ASKED FOR THE U.S. POSITION. DRAPER OUTLINED THE INFORMAL PROPOSALS WE HAD MADE IN DAMASCUS AS A WAY OF GETTING MUTUAL DISENGAGEMENT AWAY FROM FLASHPOINTS WITH INTRODUCTION OF LEBANESE POLICE AND ARMY UNITS TO TAKE OVER SECURITY. WE RECOGNIZED THAT SYRIA COULD NOT BE SEEN AS BACKING AWAY FROM CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 05 STATE 197208

CHALLENGES, BUT BELIEVED THAT HAVING LEBANESE TAKE OVER SECURITY WHENEVER THEY WERE PREPARED WAS CONSISTENT WITH PUBLICLY-STATED SYRIAN OBJECTIVES. THE U.S. WOULD STRONGLY SUPPORT ANY "WORKABLE" SOLUTION.

10. ABOUCHAER OFFERED HIS VIEW THAT THE MAJORITY OF CHRISTIANS IN LEBANON STILL SUPPORTED THE SYRIAN PRESENCE THERE. DRAPER STATED THAT THE RECENT SHELLINGS CHANGED THIS. ORDINARY MAN-IN-THE-STREET CHRISTIANS WERE AFRAID, OR CONFUSED, OR MYSTIFIED, OR PLAIN ANGRY. THEY ARE PEOPLE WHO MAY HATE WAR, WHO MAY HATE THE PHALANGE FOR THEIR EXTORTIONISM, BUT THEY ARE NOW GENUINELY UPSET OVER THE SYRIAN SHELLING. VANCE

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, US CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE197208
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: NEA/ARN:CMONROE
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780321-0044
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780896/aaaaddce.tel
Line Count: 188
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 5ce5356a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1832751
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: HOUSE ACTION TO DROP SYRIAN SSA PROGRAM
TAGS: EAID, SY, LE
To: DAMASCUS
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/5ce5356a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014